

Ron Smith and Bob Winters

www.thelittlegreenbooks.com.

**Climate Change In My Back Yard:
Caring for Children after the Floods**

1st Edition 2011 ISBN 978-0-9807505-2-2

Publisher: medialaunch.com.au Pty. Ltd.

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Foreword

The recent floods, which have swept through large areas of Australia, have destroyed tens of thousands of homes and gardens leaving families in trauma as they try to plan a way to restore their lives, their homes, their businesses and their communities, often against great odds

Whilst no one event such as this can be attributed to climate change which is a slow and developing trend, these events reflect the predictions of scientists working within this area and provide an example of the challenges our children and grandchildren may face.

The garden and gardening are one of the major touchstones of family activities where children learn their environmental life skills and an appreciation of nature.

It also provides a great part of our childhood memories and what we pass on to future generations.

The Little Green Book 'Climate Change In My Back Yard: Caring for Children after the Floods' is aimed at providing some simple easy activities focused on re-establishing a link with the recovery through gardens and the environment.

We understand that at this time there will be many people who cannot return to their homes as they wait for repairs to make their home safe.

The activities in this Little Green Book have been designed to be used anywhere with activities such as planting in pots allowing for the plants to moved or used in the home.

The flood damage is extensive and many gardens may take years to re-establish, however, we believe it is important to start the focus on planting and nourishing involvement of children with positive activities, no matter how small.

As its foundation the Little Green Book aims to provide parents and children with positive activities and projects where the entire family and friends can be involved.

It is also about taking opportunities during this stressful time to assist flood affected children who may have had traumatic experiences to cope with emotional issues.

Archicentre, the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement, Kidsafe Victoria, the Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia and Earthwatch Institute (Australia) have contributed to this Little Green Book in the section related to special help for flood victims.

The digital format allows this Little Green Book to be easily distributed via email and project pages can be printed out for creative activities.

Dedication

This ebook is dedicated to all of the victims of the floods and the many acts of courage, bravery and kindness of those involved in assisting flood victims and their communities, and members of the emergency services and the volunteers who have rallied to the clean up.

It is also dedicated to our political leaders, local MPs, local government, councillors and staff throughout Australia who have played a major role in leadership at a time of crisis and who in the future will be responsible in rebuilding many local communities.

Ron Smith

Managing Director

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About The Authors

Ron Smith is a Melbourne based publicist specialising in community awareness campaigns with a history of community environmental activity over thirty years.



From leading a major conservation group in the Dandenong Ranges against proposed freeways in Sherbrooke Forest by the Victorian Government and Road Authorities, to the development of the Victorian Government's first water conservation campaign 'Save Three Buckets a Day', he has maintained a constant interest in environmental education.

He trained as an art teacher and was responsible for having first aid tips included in Telephone Books and created the community awareness program for compulsory pool fencing into Victoria. He was a media strategist to the Urban Land Authority, now VicUrban for over a decade, devised a media strategy to introduce the Victorian Docklands Authority, and has been the media strategist for Kidsafe Victoria for over fifteen years and Archicentre, the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects. He was appointed by the Victorian Government to serve on the interim board of the Dandenongs and Yarra Valley Planning Authority. He wrote the charter for Victoria's Good Samaritan Day in 2010. www.medialaunch.com.au



Bob Winters is one of Australia's leading sustainability educators. For more than 30 years he has been working with children, schools and the community to improve their environment. Bob is an author of more than 80 environmental education and nature books. He continues to create significant environmental and sustainability curriculum materials for schools. His other major focus is as a successful nature photographer.

www.educatingoptions.com.au



For Mums and Dads

'Climate Change In My Back Yard: Caring for Children after the Floods' has been designed as a project book aimed at providing simple fun activities for children after the flood and beyond.

It also includes a parents section covering some practical areas including:

Archicentre, the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects has released several fact sheets which are aimed at helping people deal with damaged homes.

The Australian Centre of Grief and Bereavement has provided tips to assist parents understand and help children after these traumatic events.

Kidsafe Victoria has listed a number of Safety Areas to be aware of following the floods.

Earthwatch Institute (Australia) has become involved through its ClimateWatch environmental program which provides families with an ongoing rewarding involvement becoming part of a special project to record bird and wildlife sightings.

Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia - Plumbing is a key priority for people returning to flood affected properties.

Wilbur Worm's Scrapbook

We suggest you print out Wilbur Worm's Scrapbook to provide your children with their own special project book that the whole family can add to at any time. The concept of the after flood scrapbook is to encourage a positive discussion point about the flood and the recovery stage for children and parents. We suggest you include a visitor's page to encourage the sharing of experiences with family, friends and neighbours.



Just a few ideas for your
Wilbur Worm's Scrapbook

- Create a Clean Up record - write about all of the people who came to help - friends, neighbours and emergency personnel.
- Write a story about your pets and what they are up to.
- Take clippings from your local papers and include your own comments and thoughts about the articles.
- Record a photo of the first meal your family has back home.
- Write a story or do a drawing about the new furniture arriving and note the date and time.
- Include photos and write down stories about birthdays and special anniversaries.
- Take a photo and make a note of any birds returning to your garden - include the type of bird and time of day. Record the first planting in the garden after the clean up.
- Setting up your bird bath or worm farm.
- Drawings are important.
- You will note that our pages when printed out will have space at the bottom and on the right side for doodling, squiggling and making short jottings about your children's work.



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Let's get our Green Thumbs working

Hi Wilbur Worm here. It has been a bit wet and many gardens are covered with mud. It will take time to dry out before we can clean up.

So to get started we can plant up a couple of pots.

This is a good move as you can keep the pots with you wherever you are. So if you can't go home just yet you can plant up the pots and take them home when you are ready.

Things to do:

1. Get a plastic or terracotta pot and give it a good wash.
2. Fill with potting mix and plant your plant and water it in.
3. Set your special pot plant up in an area that you can see for most of the day so you can watch it grow.
4. Take a photo of your special pot plant with family members for the fridge door. Don't forget to write down the date you potted your plant in your scrapbook and make a sketch.



Here are some of the tools you will need and some of the pots and plants. Tell a story about your pot planting day in **Wilbur Worm's Scrapbook**.



Hey guess who is coming back?

The birds that visited your garden before the flood will start to return as your garden gets cleaned up and the plants and trees start to grow again.



Where they hang out: Crimson Rosellas can be seen high up in the canopy of gum trees or down on the ground. They need large tree hollows to nest in.

What they get up to: These Rosellas have many different calls to stay in communication with their friends. They mostly eat seeds and flowers. Their hooked beak is an excellent nut cracker. Even though their colour is so dazzling, when they are motionless in a tree they are very difficult to spot. Young Crimson Rosellas are mostly green with only some blue and crimson.

Which type of Rosella visits your garden?



Helping Birds after the Floods: Setting up a Bird Bath

Birds need to drink and bathe. If you want to set up a bird bath these are some of the things to think about:

- The bird bath needs to be shallow so small birds can stand in the water and splash around. A bird bath on a pedestal is safer for birds from attacking cats.
- The bird bath must be safe for children so there is no chance of it tipping over.
- Find a location where the bird bath can be seen by the family and it is close to some thick bushes so small birds can escape larger birds.
- Be sure that cats are not able to ambush the birds while they are at the bird bath.
- To have regular visitors to your bird bath, keep it constantly supplied with fresh water. During summer this will need to be every day.
- Your bird bath might be used the day it is installed or you might need to wait a couple of months.
- If you are waiting for it to be used make sure you have constant clean water.
- Eventually you will have daily visitors.

Check for more Birds in Wilbur Worm's Scrapbook.



Check the birds going to your bird bath to see if you can take a photo with a digital camera of birds having a bath. Download the pictures onto your computer. Write a story about what the birds do as they take their bath. As they don't have a towel to dry themselves how do they get dry?



Now for something special... become an environmental detective by joining ClimateWatch, an initiative of Earthwatch Institute (Australia).

Get outdoors and start watching

From your backyard, local park, reserve or beach, all you need to do to become a ClimateWatcher is observe nature and record what you see online at www.climatewatch.org.au



By becoming a ClimateWatcher you will be helping scientists understand how our environment is responding to changes in climate, and answer questions like – Are plants flowering earlier? Have breeding patterns changed? Are the migration patterns of birds changing? ClimateWatch is your chance to make a difference and enjoy the outdoors at the same time.



OBSERVE RECORD DISCOVER

Get started by visiting www.climatewatch.org.au

- Register online as a ClimateWatcher
- Search for the indicator species found near you
- Understand what characteristics to observe (e.g. leaves falling, birds nesting)
- Get outdoors and start watching the indicator species
- Record what you see, then enter your observations online

[Join ClimateWatch Now](http://www.climatewatch.org.au)



Give a worm a home

Hi again.

There are many of my friends looking for somewhere to live and there is no doubt that worms are the best thing for your garden.

They like to live in worm farms and help you cut down on waste and produce worm castings, which you can use to boost your garden.

Remember when setting up a worm farm make sure you place it in a cool shady space is fine, away from the hot afternoon sun.



Hey we would love to come and live in your worm farm.



Setting up a Worm farm

A small worm farm can be transported and is easy to set up. The only thing that will kill worms in a worm farm is allowing it to dry out and excessive heat.

Plastic worm farms with several stacked bins are the easiest way to extract the rich castings and keep the worms and their eggs in the farm. They also have a tap in the bottom bin where the liquid - the worm wee can be drained off. This can be diluted with water for an excellent fertiliser for your flower pots, vegetables and plants. The black liquid can also be stored in old bottles for later use.

But any container that has drainage will do and there are many polystyrene fruit containers that will make an excellent worm home. To set up a worm farm using a polystyrene box or other container you will need some compost to fill the bottom of the container with 5 cm.

This will give the worms a comfortable place to live. You will need a tub of special worms that can be purchased from nurseries and hardware stores.





A wet piece of carpet, hessian bag or an old bath towel to place on top of the worms to keep the moisture in and it will also help to keep it cooler. On forecast days over 30 degrees celsius you can also add plastic ice containers to the worm farm. Freeze plastic take-away containers with water and add these to keep the worms cool. The ice in the container slowly melts during the hot day keeping the worms cool. Place these containers on top of some wet newspapers over the worms and underneath the wet piece of carpet, hessian bag or old bath towel.

Place your worm farm in the shade, near a tap and close enough to the kitchen so it can be regularly fed with kitchen scraps. You will also need a container in the kitchen to collect the kitchen scraps.

Make sure the worm farm remains damp at all times. If there are flies in the worm farm they will be harmless vinegar flies unless meat products have accidentally been placed in the farm. If the flies are annoying then the mosquito trap will also work on them.





Mosquito trap

Mosquitoes and some flies are attracted to yellow. Mosquitoes are able to stand on the surface of water without sinking or getting wet. Female mosquitoes need to stand on water to lay their eggs. With this knowledge we can make a mosquito trap.

You will need a container. This can be an old plastic icecream container. If it is yellow it will work better. You will also need water, yellow food dye and some dishwashing detergent.

This is how it works. The mosquitoes are attracted to the yellow. They stand on the surface of the yellow water. The dishwashing detergent has changed the properties of the water surface and it no longer enables the mosquito to walk on water. The mosquito sinks into the water and drowns.

To set up, place the container where you want to catch mosquitoes. Fill the container leaving about 3 cm empty. Put in yellow food dye and detergent. Replace the mixture when the water no longer looks yellow. Your garden can have many containers and they also work inside.





Compost at work

A compost bin is a great way to make mulch and humus as it makes good use of your kitchen scraps and garden waste.

Have you ever had a good look inside a compost bin? You will see many tiny creatures running around and what you can't see are billions of good bacteria working hard at decomposing your waste into valuable garden mulch and humus. It takes time for this miniature zoo to find your compost bin and reproduce to enough numbers so they can do a good job.

The sooner you start your new compost bin, the more time all these creatures will have to get established. If you need to move, you can take some of your compost with you so your next compost bin has a quicker start.





Family weeding competition ... Who can find the longest root?

When the soil is wet, most of the weeds are easier to pull out. Weeding after the ground has been flooded will help your garden plants and stop the weeds from becoming uncontrollable.

The best way to weed is to pull out all the roots.

This takes a bit of patience and skill applying the right amount of strength when pulling a weed from the ground.

In this competition the winner is the person who is able to extract the weed with the longest root.

If weeding is going to be a job that takes more than 10 minutes have several competitions or invent some interesting rules.





Rain gauge

If you are going to buy a rain gauge, choose a gauge that is wide at the top and tapers down. These gauges are easy to read when there has been a small amount of rain. Otherwise you can use any container that is a perfect cylinder and then use a ruler to measure the amount of rain inside. Rain gauges are best placed in the open away from trees, houses, sheds and tall fences.





Make your own colourful wind sock

Make your own windsock with a difference. Just take a garden stake, pin colourful ribbons a metre long near the top and watch them blow in the wind. Watch to see which direction the wind is blowing from and how strong it is.





My herb garden

Herbs are good for cooking and are fun in experimental sandwiches. Most herbs can be grown from cuttings. You will need something to grow your herbs in.

This can be some old flower pots or any container with some drainage. If later you are going to plant your herbs in the garden then a wooden planter box can be made from scrap timber.

Prepare your pots or planter box with compost or potting mix before acquiring cuttings.

With a large plastic bag, visit a friend's herb garden. Smell and have a taste test of the herbs. Take some small cuttings from the different plants and place them into the plastic bag.

Tie the bag up so the plants can't dry out.

As soon as you get back, prepare the cuttings. Rip a small section of bark from where the plant was cut so there is more open stem touching the soil.

Remove any leaves on the lower part of stem. Push the stem into the soil.

Place the herbs in an area where they get some sun, but they won't become hot. Water and keep watering each day to keep the soil damp.





If its winter time and cold set your herb garden on a sunny windowsill.

With a few containers of soil and a sunny windowsill you will soon be underway growing herb pots.

Make sure to include herbs for cooking. They are a great choice for windowsills and are easy to grow with children.

Basil, chives and parsley all work well.

You can recycle old pots and large plastic yogurt containers - make sure they have drainage holes.

Tubs and pots of varying sizes for growing herbs are also available in garden centres which could have some specially designed windowsill planters

Get mum or dad to tell you what food they will make with you to use your herbs for a tasty meal.



I am out on my daily slide to get fit so I thought I would tell you about some of the things we worms get up to.

Busy worms

In 1881 Charles Darwin wrote....*"Of all animals, few have contributed so much to the development of the world as we know it as earth worms."*

Whilst our mates the Frog is the barometer of the environment the worm is the engine room of the earth creating healthy soils and also converting enormous amounts of waste into useful natural fertiliser.

Worms contribute to every aspect of life including gardening, food production, and sport by ensuring healthy grass ovals for football, or soccer or tracks for horse racing, sewage treatment and waste management.

Good soil usually has a worm population of 500 per square metre and with each worm weighing a gram this will amount to five tonnes of worms per hectare.

Environmentally with each worm eating half or more of their own weight daily each worm can till aerate and fertilise 90 kilos plus of soil per square metre each year.

We will be working very hard to help restore gardens and farms destroyed by the flood and here is a short list of what we do and who we are.



Fast Facts - Worms

You can use worms to compost up to 50% of your garbage. What's left is worm castings; a rich organic fertiliser for your garden, veggies and pot plants. Worms can even convert dog poo into rich nutrients to feed your trees and shrubs.

Worm facts

- ☐ Worms will consume between 50% and 100% of their own weight in food per day.
- ☐ They will digest anything that has ever lived.
- ☐ They multiply rapidly.
- ☐ Worms do not get diseases.

They've existed for about 600 million years. There are about 34,000 different types of worm; many are so small you wouldn't be able to see them without a microscope!

Worms are hermaphrodite, which means they have both male and female reproductive organs. They do need another worm to reproduce with though. They lay their eggs, which hatch as little worms. Worms can live for up to 10 years.

One acre of worms can break up about 50 tonnes of soil.

The longest earthworm is the African giant earthworm, which can grow up to 6.7m (22ft) long.



[Wilbur Worm's Climate Change Balancer Puzzle](#)

Help Wilbur Worm get the right balance with his environment by getting the sun, the clouds, the water, the flowers and his tree in the right place to make a happy environment for you, the birds and all of the animals.

Tell other people about this page so they can help too.

When you click on the picture you will find the Climate Change Puzzle will open in a new window on the Little Green Book website. Once you have finished close the web page and you will come back to this page.

Have a contest and see who can balance Wilbur's environment the quickest.

[Turn your speakers on](#)



Let's get started with the scrapbook on the next page.

Hi yes that's me on the next page having a look at Wilbur Worm's Scrapbook for you to put all of your drawings, jottings, poems, record of bird watching, new plantings, and even try to work out what my home looks like underground.

You can print out the pages and then just keeping adding when you need more. Remember to fill out your name, school and the town you live in.

You can keep Wilbur Worm's Scrapbook in a special folder with a paper clip holding it together so you can add pages.

You could stick special pages on the fridge door to exhibit your work for the family. I would like to be on the fridge door where all the action is during meal time.

Wilbur Worm's



©

SCRAPBOOK

Name

Age

Town

School

My Scrapbook Visitors

Name

Date



Collect all the different types of leaves
in your garden, draw their outline and
colour them in on this page.



Can you tell Wilbur about your favourite tree and why you like it?
Does it have any flowers and does it drop its leaves?

My Favourite Tree



Get mum or dad to take a photo of you and your favourite tree and stick it in your Scrapbook.



This is a special tree - tell us on the next page what type of tree it is and draw who you think could live in it and how high do you think is.



If you had climbed this tree what could you see below in your own garden?



Draw flowers that are starting to appear in your garden as the soil dries out. Get mum or dad to help with drawing, colouring and naming. Write down what you like about each flower.



Draw what you think is in my underground home. Make a list of what you think you would find.



Write down what your pets have been doing and do a drawing with them. Make a list of their names. Have they had a bath after the flood?



Have you seen any frogs around and what have they been doing? List where you have seen them.



Frogs

Frogs like the rain. They will become more active and start calling for mates when it has been raining. You might hear more frogs in your garden and see them on your windows. During the day they will be hiding in your garden under leaves, rocks and logs. Frogs eat many insects and spiders.

Frogs and their tadpoles are easily killed by pollution. Chemicals can get through their thin skin.



Can you spot any butterflies in your garden? What colour are they?



Forest butterflies

Forest butterflies might visit your garden. They will drink the nectar from your flowers. They will be searching for the right plants to lay their eggs. Some butterflies lay their eggs in grasses, some need vines and others lay their eggs in shrubs and trees. Each type of caterpillar can only eat a few plants.

Butterflies have different bright coloured patterns on their wings so they tell which butterflies are the same as them.



Become a bird detective and see if you can track down the name of the following birds.



Name



Name



Name



These flowers are impatiens and I have seen them growing in the garden. Draw some of your own flowers below and colour them in.





Have you seen any swans or ducks around in your town? Draw your own swan family.



Ducks and swans

Wetlands near our home will have ducks and swans. Most of Australia's water birds will fly to where ever the food is best. After floods many ducks will start breeding. Any ducks or swans that had nests close to the water before floods will have had their nests washed away.



Geckoes

Geckoes only come out at night. They need their large eyes to see at night. The large pads on their toes help them to climb on smooth surfaces and upside down. Some types of geckoes can be found living inside and around the outside of our home. They often position themselves near lights. The lights attract insects which they eat.



Water dragons

Some water dragons live in our gardens. They hunt for insects and snails. They are good swimmers and are also found living along rivers. They protect themselves by running away and hiding. Water dragons will warm up in the morning sun. They need hiding places and they like ponds.



Wilbur Worm ©

at

www.thelittlegreenbooks.com

Print me out for your fridge door



The Little Green Book After the Flood Resource Section

Information is often the key to success in difficult times and we have included a number of resource links from people we believe can assist and would like to thank:

The Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement
Archicentre, the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects
Kidsafe Victoria
Earthwatch Institute (Australia)



Ten Tips for Supporting Children after a Crisis

Christopher Hall

Director

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

1. Don't underestimate the impact a crisis might have on a child

Children may not respond to a crisis in the way that adults expect them to. Therefore children need to be reassured that their basic needs will be met and that over time their pain will decrease. Try to maintain routines and standards of discipline as much as possible, as this creates a sense of safety, security and predictability for the child. Remember, just because children look like they are ok doesn't mean they are.

2. In protecting children we can isolate them from support

A crisis often places families in a double bind. In their attempts to protect their children, parents may try to hide their emotions from their children. At the same time children don't want to see their parents upset and may try to protect their parents by avoiding displays of emotion in front of them.

3. Children need role models

Children are at the mercy of those around them for help or hindrance and need good role models. If they see you expressing your feelings openly then it will be acceptable for them to express their feelings openly as well, they have permission to express their feelings.

4. Children need opportunities to express their feelings in their own way

Children, especially young children, may not have the ability to express their feelings through words. Feelings may be expressed through their behaviours (i.e. crying, withdrawal, bedwetting, lack of interest in food, or disruptive behaviour at school). It is important to remember that children need opportunities to express their feelings in their own way (i.e. drawing, painting, storytelling, collage, and music, making memory boxes, writing poetry or letters). Don't analyse or interpret the child's work, rather allow them to tell you about it.

5. Don't hurry the child

Children often break their feelings up into manageable bits, as it's difficult for them to tolerate ongoing, intense pain. Just as children have short attention spans they also have short feeling spans. It is not unusual to see a variety of emotions unfold in a short span of time as children slowly work through their emotions. Children may also need to ask questions over and over again to make sense of what has happened. Remember that it is important to be patient. Speak to children at a level they understand, provide them with clear, consistent answers and don't be afraid to ask the child what they are thinking or feeling.

6. Children's age and stage of development will influence their understanding.

Where a crisis involves the death of a loved one it is important to remember that children are often unable to understand the permanence of death can anticipate the return of the person who died.

As they grow older, they will learn to grasp the finality and permanency of death. In the meantime though, parents need to be attuned to the child's perceptions of death by asking them about the person who has died and gently helping them to understand that the person who has died is not coming back. Reassure them that the person is not in any pain and no longer needs to eat or sleep. Avoid metaphors such as 'gone to sleep', 'at rest' or 'lost' as this may be confusing for children who can take these terms literally.

7. Inclusion and informed choice

Remember, as much as possible, to include children in the decision making process following a crisis. It is also important that children are given choices over their involvement in various activities following the crisis (i.e. funerals). Let the child know what to expect during the activity and allow them to choose if they want to be involved or not.

8. A sense of control

Any control that the child felt they had before the crisis has now been taken away and it becomes important for them to regain some sense of control over things that happen to them. It is therefore important, wherever possible, for children to be given some control over situations.

9. You know your child

The affects of a crisis can stay with us for a long time and our emotions and feelings in relation to the crisis can be triggered at different times.

As parents, our protective instinct is to become concerned and worried very quickly.

Often this concern is based on our own fears. We look at children and we believe that they're not coping, and we are then quick to seek professional help.

As adults, if we are not ready for professional help, it won't do us any good.

The same goes for children. So try not to rush into seeking professional help too quickly. Remember though that, parents know their children best and if you are concerned that your child/children are not coping, it may be useful to consult a professional.

10. When to seek professional support or advice

If children experience long-term and ongoing distress then consider seeking professional support and assistance.

www.grief.org.au/



Potential hazards to be aware of after a flood include:

Debris: Items such as furniture, tree branches and fencing may be left lying around after a flood. Such items can pose a hazard for cutting and piercing injuries.

Animals: Potentially dangerous animals such as snakes may have taken refuge from the flood in dry areas such as sheds.

Slippery and wet surfaces: Outdoor surfaces will be slippery and wet and can therefore pose a hazard for slip, trip and fall injuries.

Play Equipment: Children's play equipment - swing sets and bicycles should be checked to ensure that they have not been damaged by the flood, and that they are still safe for children to use.

Garden containers: Items capable of holding water such as buckets should be checked. If they do contain water, they should be emptied immediately as this can pose a drowning hazard for children.

Home ponds: These should be checked to ensure that they have not overflowed. The cover or mesh over the pond should also be checked to ensure that it has not been damaged or removed by the floods.

Pools of floodwater: Children should never be allowed to venture into or play in floodwaters as they can be contaminated and dangerous.

www.kidsafevic.com.au



Archicentre Repair and Rebuilding After Floods

Like all Australians, Archicentre was shocked at the devastation wrought by the catastrophic floods throughout Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria during January 2011.

The extent and size of these floods will have an impact on thousands of Australians who will face the daunting task of making decisions about their homes.

The aftermath of a flood event is a traumatic time with resources stretched and emotions strained making it vital that people plan their approach to cleaning up carefully to avoid costly mistakes and further financial challenges.

The priority for most people is to get back into their property, to clean it up and to start repairing the damage as soon as possible.

Whilst generous offers of assistance will fuel their initial enthusiasm, lasting and expensive mistakes can be made if this process isn't clearly understood.

It is a mistake, for example, to assume that once the debris has been cleared away repair work can start immediately.

The real purpose of a clean-up is to fully expose the building so its condition can be carefully checked and so it can begin to dry out.

The clean-up process, then, is a sequence of events that must begin with certification by a licensed electrical contractor that power can be safely reconnected to the building.

Once this is done, debris removal can commence. Archicentre has a range of **Flood Fact Sheets** that outline some of the things that need to be considered during the clean-up process, particularly in relation to safety, drying and building integrity.

Floodwater will have a significant effect on building materials like particleboard, fibreboard, plasterboard and fibrous materials like insulation and carpets.

Keep in mind that very little of your internal fitout is likely to be salvageable.

When the bulk of the debris has been removed, an assessment by an independent structural engineer is critical to establish the extent to which the structure or the foundations of the building have been affected.

If the structure of the building is sound, repair can be considered, but if the building is deemed to be unsound there is little point in progressing with the clean up until further decisions are made.

No decisions should be made regarding the repair of the building until independent, written advice has been provided by a registered structural engineer. A structural engineer is the only person qualified to provide you with this advice.

It is at this stage when people have received advice on the structural soundness of their building and are making decisions on whether to renovate, rebuild or relocate the Archicentre services can provide a full range of special independent professional advice, on Design Concepts, Construction Advice Reports or New Home Design.

Each of these services is specifically designed to assist people where they find they need some professional advice in solving problems to progress their rebuilding

Repairing the Property

Property repairs are complicated at the best of times and after a flood they can be even more problematic.

It is highly unlikely that a building will be able to be repaired for some time after immersion in water. Timbers will need to dry out for some months prior to fixing plasterboard and concrete slabs must be thoroughly dry before any floor coverings are laid.

Work done in haste will inevitably need to be redone after only a few months.

Good tradespeople will be in short supply, demand will be extreme and prices will inevitably rise and unfortunately there are likely to be people looking to capitalise on the misfortune of others.

It will be more important than ever to have a clear sense of what work needs to be done and who should do it. It is also important to ensure that a fair price is being paid and that workmanship meets industry standards.

An Archicentre Construction Advice Report can assist people sorting out work required and can be used to check the quality of work independently to ensure a quality job

Registrations need to be verified, insurances need to be checked and contracts need to be signed to ensure that homeowners are not exposed to further financial risk.

Demolishing and Rebuilding

There will be many homes that have been destroyed by floodwaters or which have simply been damaged beyond repair.

The priority for these unfortunate homeowners will be to establish temporary accommodation whilst they consider whether to rebuild or simply purchase an established home elsewhere.

For those deciding to rebuild, many will want to rebuild on the same property whilst others may prefer to purchase land and build elsewhere.

In either case there are many options including kit homes, project homes, purpose-designed homes and even house relocation.

For home owners wanting to rebuild on the same location, an Archicentre Design Concept, where an Archicentre Architect will assist in developing a design concept for the new home in consultation with the family on site, is a good starting point to avoid costly mistakes and ensure the new design takes into account the issue of flooding.

In all cases, however, there will be regulatory controls that determine what can be built, where it can be built and in some cases how it can be built.

As with any new home building project it's important to make enquiries of all relevant authorities to establish just what can and can't be done before deciding upon the course of action and certainly before committing to any expense.

It is also likely that regulations will change in the aftermath of the floods, so regardless of how much you may want to start a rebuild process, it is imperative that you either engage an architect or make very sure that you are independently checking all advice that you are given.

An architect can handle all of these considerations for you and these costs are likely to be covered by your insurance policy, but if you choose to look after this yourself then the local Council is the best starting point to determine whether any Planning /Development controls affect the property or whether there are any specific siting issues that need to be considered.

It is also important to check the property title to see if there are any restrictions such as easements or covenants on the land that might have a bearing upon the design or the location of the building.

Relocation

For some people the prospect of rebuilding will be too daunting, will take far too long or will be too traumatic to contemplate. It is also something that will invariably be affected by changing legislation around flood prone areas that will further complicate the process and no doubt frustrate many.

This of course will mean relocating. Once a preferred location and a budget have been established the search can begin. Most house-hunting these days is done via the internet using websites like www.realestate.com.au which will allow you to set up specific property searches to alert you to any properties fitting your criteria as soon as they are listed for sale.

Once you've found 'the one', remember to research the neighbourhood, the property and the building thoroughly, including a Pre-Purchase Building and Pest Inspection if you think you are likely to purchase it. Make your purchase subject to an inspection revealing no serious faults or termite activity.

Make contact with a solicitor to assist you with the conveyancing and double check your borrowing capacity before making any offers, particularly if buying at auction.

Make sure that you have left sufficient funds to cover any major faults identified in your pre-purchase inspection – remember that statistically around 1/3rd of all homes sold have a serious fault.

Archicentre Free Flood Facts Resources available to download from www.archicentre.com.au

[Flood Facts 1 Overview](#)

[Flood Facts 2 Health and Safety](#)

[Flood Facts 3 Clean Up](#)

[Flood Facts 4 Building Integrity](#)

[Flood Facts 5 Drying](#)

[Flood Facts 6 Repairs](#)

For further information about these services contact Archicentre on

1300 134 513 or visit www.archicentre.com.au



Plumbing is a key priority for people returning to flood affected properties. If your property has been affected by recent floods, consider the following.

Residents should contact a licensed Master Plumber to check on:

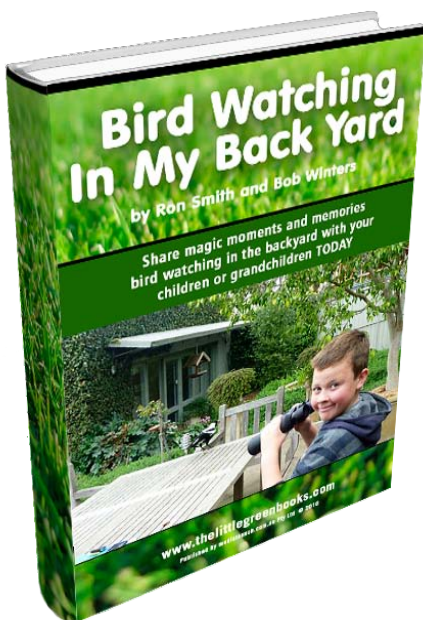
- Septic overflows (contamination of surrounding area due to egress of water)
- Silted drains (drains being full of silt due to muddy flood water)
- Gas regulators and burners on hot waters systems which could be wet and blocked with silt
- Gas bottles that may have floated and caused leaks in the gas system
- Backflow valves may need retesting to ensure correct operation
- Downpipes that are connected to underground storm water drains which may be blocked with silt
- Water tanks that have had flood water enter the tank resulting in possible contamination (especially when it is the drinking water supply or supplying other fixtures in the house)

[Master Plumbers Fact Sheets](#)



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Hi Ron

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1st Edition 2011 ISBN 978-0-9807505-2-2

Publisher: medialaunch.com.au Pty. Ltd.

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ABN 69 067 524 921

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Photography: Bob Winters

Cover Design: Scott Garrett

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